

Pioneer Press, June 19, 2008

Citing concern about an increase in gun violence nationwide, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk has introduced legislation to restore the federal assault weapons ban that expired in 2004.

Kirk, R-10th, of Highland Park, held a press conference Monday in Chicago about the new gun control legislation. He was joined by supporters of the assault weapons ban, including Palatine Mayor Rita Mullins, Waukegan Police Chief Bill Biang, and Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence Executive Director Thom Mannard.

Kirk said when he ran for Congress in 1999, he opposed the federal assault weapons ban expiration in September 2004. He said he's backed legislation since then to reinstate it, and this year went even further by introducing his own.

"I was surprised because the Democrats control Congress, and yet 18 months after taking office they have yet to approve this legislation and that's why I introduced my own bill," he said.

During the 10 years the assault weapons ban was in effect from 1994 to 2004, Kirk said violent crimes involving assault weapons dropped by more than 60 percent.

In recent years, he said assault weapons have been used in 20 percent of the murders of police officers nationwide.

"Just two weeks ago, there was a hostage situation in Waukegan where a man armed with two assault weapons shot over 30 rounds of ammunition at police officers," said Kirk.

No police officers were injured in the shooting, but the suspect committed suicide.

The assault weapons ban covers a host of semi-automatic weapons, such as M16s, AK47s, UZIs, and TEC-9s, as well as revolving cylinder shotguns such as the Street Sweeper and Striker 12.

Dan Seals, the Democratic opponent in the November general election, said Kirk has a mixed record on gun control legislation.

"While there is little disagreement as to the urgent need for a renewal of the assault weapons ban, Mark Kirk needs to answer for why he failed to stand up to the NRA (National Rifle Association) on granting immunity to gun dealers and manufacturers and voted twice against increasing funding for the COPS program, which helps put more police officers on the streets," Seals said.

"The 10th district deserves a congressman who will fight year in and year out for policies to keep our communities safe, not just when it's politically convenient," he added.